

Neighborhood Networks

Monthly Conference Call

“Inclusionary Programs: Planning Programs for Seniors and People with
Disabilities”

August 24, 2004

3:00 p.m. ET

Operator: Good day ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks August Conference Call. At this time, all participants are in a listen only mode. Later we will conduct a question and answer session and instructions will follow at that time. If anyone should require assistance during the conference, please press “star” then “zero” on your touch-tone telephone. As a reminder, this conference is being recorded. I would now like to introduce your host for today’s conference, Ms. Vickie Schachter from Neighborhood Networks. Ms. Schachter you may begin your conference.

Vickie Schachter: Thank you Adrian. Good afternoon and welcome to the Neighborhood Network’s August Conference Call, “Inclusionary Programs: Planning Program for Seniors and People with Disabilities”. We are really fortunate to have with us today two outstanding speakers who represent two Neighborhood Networks centers - one in New York City and one in Jonesborough, Tennessee. But before I introduce our speakers, I’d like to take a few moments of your time to remind all of the conference call participants that this conference call is being recorded. In about a week, both an audio recording, as well as a transcript of this call will be available on the neighborhood networks website. The address for the neighborhood networks website is www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

I also want to remind Multifamily Neighborhood Network participants on this call that the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, START, is a handy electronic tool for capturing programmatic information about goals, objectives, numbers of people planned to be served, and numbers of people actually served. You can access START through the Neighborhood Networks website at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org. And if you would like some additional information or assistance with START, please call us at 888-312-2743. This is a toll-free information line.

As I said previously, today’s call is entitled “Inclusionary Programs: Planning Programs for Seniors and People with Disabilities.” Most multifamily properties have some residents who are seniors and some residents who have disabilities, either visible or hidden. An example of a hidden disability would be epilepsy or a specific learning disability. An example of a visible disability would be someone who uses a wheelchair for mobility. There are also a number of Neighborhood Networks centers that specifically serve as senior properties and there are some properties that are designed especially for people with disabilities. We know that many seniors would choose to re-enter or enter the work world for either financial reasons or as unpaid volunteers, if help to do so were made available. We further know that only a small percent of people with disabilities who want to work are able to access the services and support they need to facilitate an employment outcome. In planning and implementing Neighborhood Networks center programs, center staff should be

mindful to either integrating these two special groups or to designing specific programs to support seniors and to support people with disabilities. It is also important to remember that programs that are designed to serve these two groups help resident participants towards maintaining or increasing their independence and self-sufficiency.

Now for today, we are privileged to have with us today Aiysha Mayfield and Mabel Sandidge. Aiysha Mayfield, our first speaker, is the program coordinator at Goodwill Industries Diane Armstrong Family Learning Center, located in Astoria, New York. She has been with the center for four years and has worked her way up the career ladder to become the program coordinator. Aiysha has been affiliated for many years with Goodwill's youth services and is a native New Yorker. Mabel Sandidge is a native of Argentina and has lived in the United States for nine years. She studied at Universidad Nacional de la Patagonia San Juan Bosco in Trelew, and plans to continue her education in Tennessee. Mabel has worked at NBA Bethel Housing since 1998. She started there as a bookkeeper/secretary and in 2000, when the computer learning center opened, Mabel was appointed as coordinator. Mabel has also been a speaker at several conferences related to Neighborhood Networks and to computer learning centers. I'll now turn the call over to Aiysha Mayfield, who will be followed by Mabel Sandidge. After Mabel finishes her presentation, we will open up the call for questions. Aiysha?

Aiysha Mayfield: Yes, I'm here. Like I was introduced, my name is Aiysha Mayfield and I am a representative of the Diane Armstrong Family Learning Center here in Astoria, and we are a sub-division of a bigger company, which is Goodwill Industries, and we have a lot of different programs that we offer. But primarily I deal with the Family Learning Center. And some of the services that we offer are English as a Second Language, computer classes and GED and Adult Ed classes for both people with disabilities and those who do not have disabilities. And we do partner with some educational components of the La Guardia Community college and the Board of Education. They actually provide the training and we provide the space. For a person to be eligible for our program they just need to be a New York City resident. We do not require individuals to have a Social Security Number or to have a green card or any legal status. And if they do have a disability, we do not discriminate against them.

At this point, I would like to talk about some of the things that we have experienced with our program. In 2003, we had serviced approximately 727 people. And of those people, 26 of the consumers were people with disability. And out of those 26, 19 of those participants were enrolled in our computer-based training. And the only requirement for that is that they have a third grade reading level and they have some mobile skills. So, a lot of the consumers that are affiliated with other Goodwill Programs can come to our computer training, and take it and be successful at it. So,

out of the 19 participants who came to the program and took the computer based training, six of them were able to go on and complete courses in various Microsoft Office applications such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and be given a certificate of completion stating that they understood the program and they were able to use it on their own. And we then surveyed each of our clients after they completed the course and asked them if there were things that they thought the program could do better, or if there were other services that we could offer. And so in doing so, a lot of them expressed that there were employment issues that they wanted addressed and I said that we do have other programs here at Goodwill. I was then able to refer them to other Goodwill employment programs within this very institution. So, a lot of them were able to not just take the computer training here but to get employment opportunities also.

And in 2004 because of the surveys and the things that I had tried to implement and find out of what were the students needs in 2004, I wound up servicing 31 people with disabilities and that was almost double the amount of people. So they were going home and they were going back to their institutions and they were saying, you know, the Family Learning Center is a place that we can go where our needs are getting addressed. And so they would come and we would just repeat the process. So, one of the things that I thought that made this very successful was that we did outreach and we asked them what it was that they wanted to do and participate in. More and more people are coming to our center with disabilities and registering -- and signing up not just for computer classes but also for vocational training. They want to try to get their GED and because we do partner with the Board of Education, they do have a Special Ed division that we can refer them to as adults at this point in time. There are centers that I refer people to where they can take their GED if they happen to be visually impaired.

So, I'm doing outreach with other municipal agencies and finding out what type of services that they have available so I can bring them here to this center where I can give it to the consumers who come here. And I don't really deal so much with the seniors but Goodwill does have programs in place for senior citizens that we provide under our community, redevelopment branch. Within that program they provide arts and crafts, they provide field trips and also they create a forum. We can't be necessarily classified as a senior center but we like to create that senior center type atmosphere for them where they can come, they can mingle, there is open discussion where they can talk about whatever the issues that seniors need to talk about. We have speakers come in from different organizations that can address some of their immediate needs such as health care, adequate housing, meals, things like that that seniors seem to have. They really don't a lot of times ask people to advocate for them, so we bring different people from agencies to come and to talk to them, and we usually do these type of things on Saturdays and maybe Wednesdays when we take them out on field trips. We have created a garden club exclusively for senior

citizens and those people with disabilities where we have a community garden here in the Astoria area where they go and they tend to the bushes and they plant bulbs and trees and small trees and things of that effect.

So, we are continuously trying to outreach into our community. We survey the community as often as possible to find out what are the needs that they have and how as a center, we can address them. And one of that things that in the future the Family Learning Center in itself is trying to do is not just be a school so much as a community center where people can come, not just for an education, but for resources. And one of the ways we are doing that is by having an open lab where they can access the Internet and they can do search and we have tons and tons of referrals and resources books for things anywhere from SAT prep to travel and gardening to home decorations. We've created a community library -- it's a lending library. You come in, you just sign your name, and you can take out informational books and then you can just return them and take another book out. So we are trying to do a lot of different things and people are again letting us know some of the things that they would like to see the center do.

So, in doing so they are allowing us to grow and because of the things that we have been doing and implementing these last couple of years, since I believe 1998, we were nominated and we received an award for best practices, our center did, we're just continuously trying to expand. In the last two years, we've opened two additional centers, one in Brooklyn and one Harrison, New Jersey. And the premise is the same, that we are not just going to offer vocational services but community services as well and at this time that's about everything that I have to say, so I will turn the floor back over.

Vickie Schachter: Thank you Aiysha. It was a pleasure to hear you speak about the Diane Armstrong Center and I know we are going to have a lot of questions about that center because it has a rich and long history. I'll now turn the conference call over to Mabel Sandidge.

Mabel Sandidge: Thank you Vickie. Good afternoon everybody. And as Vickie stated it, my name is Mabel Sandidge and I am the coordinator of NBA Bethel Housing Neighborhood Networks Computer Learning Center located in Jonesborough, Tennessee. I have been working with elderly residents for four rewarding years. Our computer-learning center provides to our 50 residents a chance to go on-line on their own time. As well as being members of the classes, we provide for them.

I would like to share with you examples of the programs we use in our center and experiences among the residents, which have made this program a success. When we first started our program in the year 2000, I was teaching several of the students how to use a phone book on line. As a result of this teaching, a resident found her

brother whom she hadn't seen in 17 years. She passed away a year later. Nevertheless, she and her brother kept in touch for an entire year and were able to catch up with their memories and experiences that would have been missed if they hadn't been able to find each other. On one occasion, we had a chance to talk to her brother and he also mentioned to us that he had been looking for her as well. It was an amazing way to re-unite this family and a joy in Ethel's eyes. I will never forget that wonderful experience and I feel very blessed that I was a part of that beautiful moment.

Recently, as a result of the use of e-mail, another resident learned about her daughter's children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren after 12 years of no communication. It is such a joy to see her exchanging pictures with her family, and then loading pictures from her e-mail. Little by little, with the use of other programs, she has created her own book of memories decorated in a beautiful way because of programs such as Corel and Word. This resident is also a very talented person who loves crafts and decoration. She makes crafts using what she finds on-line and she is always willing to cooperate with a display of her talent at different events we hold in our facility.

Another resident, with a severe lung disease is not able get out of her apartment very often. So, her window to the world is the Internet. She stays in touch with her next-door neighbor through e-mail since they have similar health problems. They both use a wheelchair. They are pretty much confined to their apartments because they are not able to get out very often. But they find so much joy communicating with each other. This resident also finds joy in playing Scrabble in her computer. The Scrabble keeps her mind active and has filled her life with positive thoughts and renewed energy despite her physical challenges.

One of the other students is working diligently on her genealogy, not only in the research of her loved ones, but also creating valuable records for her own family. She has found it inspiring, as she learns the use of spreadsheets in Excel. Another resident, through the use of e-mail, found love and was reunited with his girlfriend who moved into our facility. The two of them enjoy finding free online e-cards and creating beautiful cards using word processing and Clip Art. The computer is also a good tool to help them exchange pictures with their loved ones through their e-mails. Mainly, they enjoy their online research about the churches they belong to and different religious materials available on the Web.

Many students and the other residents in general, benefit from medical research as much as finding information about their own prescriptions. We do research on tips for better health and we use the information found in the monthly newsletters so the 50 residents can benefit as well. Some of our residents have lots of energy and because they are active people, they are also volunteers for our center. They help

with different needs the center has. For example, doing research for possible grants that will benefit our center or the decoration of the board, to let the rest know the different activities that take place during the month. Some residents also create a monthly calendar along with birthday signs for the board. They enjoy participating in the decoration of our building for the holidays and other important events. And that really helps them to feel that they are doing something good not only for themselves but for the rest.

As I learn about their interests, I try to make their experience with computers a fun one, because we work together doing the things that they enjoy. This is a positive experience for everyone involved. We work enhancing their talents, likes, and hobbies. We focus on what they like to do and not necessarily what I like to do. Our learning center is about our residents and not about the instructors. Many have fun through the use of games such as Solitaire, Scrabble, on-line puzzles, and other games they find amusing. They find it very positive and uplifting to share jokes and stories through their e-mail.

All the programs that we are currently using have been extremely beneficial because the residents who take the computer lessons are happier. They are mentally stimulated. They create a positive environment. They have a happier attitude, and they have fun. They are motivated to explore new avenues. Also, the residents who are involved as volunteers to our center have a good sense of self worth, confidence, and motivation. The volunteers enjoy sharing their knowledge and experience. The positive attitude generated through our students is contagious and motivates others to get involved in similar activities. The residents remain mentally alert, healthier, and independent for a longer period of time. The fact that the residents are involved in finding their own answers keeps them self sufficient and self-reliant.

And I will give you another interesting detail about our center: the youngest resident who participates in the program is 62 years old, the oldest is 85. This shows you that it's never too late to keep learning. And I'd like to share with all of you something that at the beginning, when I was challenged to become the coordinator of this program, I didn't have a manual to go by and to go about teaching the elderly. So this was very new to me. And as the years have gone by I've learned a few tips that I'd like to share with all of you because perhaps there will be somebody in the audience wondering similar questions to the ones I had when I first started here. And these are the things that I have learned through my experience working with these wonderful residents.

Number one, be aware of people's individualities. Everybody is not the same. Everybody likes different things and I had to learn to work around those individualities and not take all of them and say "okay, because they are elderly, they just want to do e-mail" when not everybody was interested in that. So, I had to learn

to work around what they like and who they truly are. Then I had to discover what interests them. I always had to keep a positive attitude because sometimes they were a little afraid or had a little worry that if they hit the wrong key everything was going to fall apart. I always had to keep a positive attitude in me because that's contagious and that keeps them positive as well.

I had to learn to be very patient and to repeat the same thing several times. But it's so wonderful to see them learning and doing things on their own. Teach them one step at a time in baby steps. Keep it simple. Be a good listener. Help them overcome their fears and encourage them all the time. Give them recognition for what they have accomplished. This has helped so much that I give them a certificate telling them how well they are doing in the different levels based on the things that they are learning. Everybody doesn't learn at the same speed. That helps them so much that they have such a good sense of self worth and doing something good. They can keep it in the back of their mind. So that's an important message at this age when perhaps the message they receive outside of our community is that you are not that good anymore because you are getting old but they know they are good and I always encourage them in that area.

Always remind them of their constant progress and be creative so you can motivate many people and help them to be a part of your program as well. And this is my last thought. If you love what you do you will succeed, as you strive to accomplish your goals. I appreciate the time to talk to all of you. Thank you.

Vickie Schachter: Thank you so much Mabel. It's very clear from what you've said that you love what you do and I think that the older people who are residents and who use your center services are indeed fortunate to be working with a person like yourself.

Mabel Sandidge: Thank you.

Vickie Schachter: You are welcome. I would like to turn this over for question and answer now.

Operator: Ladies and Gentlemen if you have a question at this time please press the "1" key on your touch-tone telephone. If your question has been answered or you wish to remove yourself from the queue, please press the "#" key. Again if you have a question at this time please press the "1" key on touch-tone telephone. The first question is from Alan Stultz from Interfaith of Woodland.

Alan Stultz: Yes, my question is for Mabel. Besides how do you manage to keep your own enthusiasm level so high with the very repetitive nature of teaching seniors, how do manage to squeeze all that into a 40-hour week?

Mabel Sandidge: That's a very good question and it really is a challenge. What I do is I make a plan of the different lessons that I am going to teach and I try to team up with the residents. I like to teach probably two at a time. If you have three together that will create a big disaster. So its either one-on-one or two at a time and usually what I do is I find one that is very positive and I try to keep one that maybe has a hard time being very enthusiastic. So, I am trying to teach them based on their needs. I find out what their needs our through a little survey. Then our classes last between an hour and an hour and a half. But I do the planning the week before, let's say by Friday, so I already know what I will be teaching the following week. Then, if it gets to be too repetitive and I see that the person is not getting the concept, we play a game, take their minds off what they are doing at that moment because it can be frustrating. And then we go back the next time. I try never to give them the message that they are not doing well. I always find a way to work around those issues. I don't know if that's helping you.

Alan Stultz: Oh yes, that's very helpful. Thank you. And I do have another question for Aiysha but I would return the floor to the moderator in case someone else would like to ask a question.

Operator: The next question is from Paul Revelly from B'nai Brith.

Paul Revelly: Hi! We have an eight-computer lab center in our B'nai Brith Housing for Seniors. And I have been working there about six years. One of the things is that I come at this from an education background as a teacher in gifted curriculum and I have been looking for a quality curriculum for seniors because of the pace of which we have to adapt this program. Is there anything out there that you all could recommend in terms of a quality workbook? We create our own but it's a mish-mash.

Mabel Sandidge: That's basically, what I have done here. I have created my own book and again I go based on what their interests are, so it's different for everybody. I will be happy to share with you what I have. If any of you want any of the information that I have. I am going to give you my e-mail address, which is nbabethel@earthlink.net . I'd be more than happy to share with you what I am using here.

Paul Revelly: Thank you very much. Am I still on line?

Mabel Sandidge: Yes, you are.

Paul Revelly: Okay, the ideas that you are sharing are very valuable. We are doing similar things and if I can give one more tip encouraging seniors. What we joke with them about is, because we run 12 months or nine months out of the year and we run semester classes two times a week, if someone wanted to know what scheduling looks like we run four days of classes and they meet one hour two time a week. So, we run on

Monday, Wednesday and a Tuesday - Thursday. And we run about four classes or five classes per day. There are two part-time teachers, me and one other teacher. So, that's how we work it. We have a greeting card class where we create cards. We have a newsletter class where the tenants create the newsletter for their building. We have a scanning class. We have a beginning class, a word class. So, that's how we do our scheduling. Someone asked that question, so I want to share that. Thank you.

Vickie Schachter: Thank you. Adrian, any additional questions?

Operator: The next question is from Kadija Samba from Aimco.

Kadija Samba: Hi, everybody.

Vickie Schachter: Hello.

Kadija Samba: How are you doing?

Vickie Schachter: Okay.

Kadija Samba: I haven't opened my Neighborhood Network Center yet and I was just listening to the last speaker. She gave me some very, very good ideas. I don't have too many elderly people here. I think I have about nine of them. So, in that case, I was thinking that maybe I should have a separate one for of them, because I have young family member here – majority of them. So, what do you think about that?

Vickie Schachter: Mabel, Aiysha, do you want to weigh in and give this?

Aiysha Mayfield: What I would say is that, it's best that you take into account the people you are servicing. If you have a population of seniors, you can set up a program that's geared specifically for them.

Kadija Samba: Okay.

Aiysha Mayfield: Like Mabel said. You know, it's easier for her to work with maybe one or two at a time. So, if you have nine seniors then you could probably set up a class setting where you can just deal with them and whatever it is that they want. You can survey your consumers to find out the types of things that they will like to use or do in the lab.

Kadija Samba: Okay.

Aiysha Mayfield: That way it will be easier for you when you start setting up your curriculum.

Mabel Sandidge: Okay. And I also would like to mention that if you conduct a survey, then you will have a better idea of what is what you need to do.

Kadija Samba: Okay.

Mabel Sandidge: So, let's say that you find five people interested in the same thing. Then you know that that's a strong point for you to start.

Kadija Samba: Okay.

Mabel Sandidge: So, that really will help you a lot and again if you want to send me an E-mail, I have a copy of the survey I use here.

Kadija Samba: Okay.

Mabel Sandidge: And it's very, very positive for me. So, I will be more than happy to share that review as well.

Kadija Samba: All right, I will. Thank you very much. You have some good ideas.

Mabel Sandidge: Thank you, I appreciate it.

Operator: The next question is from Christinia Lopez from Elderly Housing.

Christinia Lopez: Yes, good afternoon. Thank you for inviting us to this great conference. The ideas and recommendations are really terrific, but I think that you are all way ahead of where we would like to be some day. I am the National Service Coordinator for E.Elderly Housing and I oversee 30 service coordinators at our housing for seniors throughout the nation. And we would love to duplicate this model that you are talking about, but I think that we need more information about how and where to find our resources to get started. Is there an idea or does anybody have a suggestion as to how to go about getting our resources because you are talking about computers, scanners, Excel software -- and we have none of this. We have the space, we have the seniors, and we have the coordinators that are willing and able to help establish the program. But, my question is how do I find the resources to get all this started?

Vickie Schachter: Well, I would be glad to respond to that question. This Vickie Schachter at Neighborhood Networks. The first thing I'd suggest is that you go to in the Neighborhood Networks website at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org and that you check our publications and resources.

Christinia Lopez: Uh-huh.

Vickie Schachter: Many of them can be downloaded, but you can also call us on our toll free information line at 888-312-2743. We can send you some publications and also we would be happy to speak with you and assist you.

Christinia Lopez: Okay.

Vickie Schachter: And we will also give you some other references and referrals that can be helpful to you.

Christinia Lopez: Okay. All right. We will do that then. Thank you.

Vickie Schachter: Thank you.

Operator: Again if you have a question at this time, please press the "1" key on your touch-tone telephone.

Vickie Schachter: Adrian, I have a question. This is Vickie Schachter. I would like to direct my question to Aiysha Mayfield. Aiysha, in talking about computer training and serving people with disabilities in your computer training classes, can you address any problems, barriers, issues or costs related to accommodating people with disabilities, particularly people with perhaps physical disabilities using the existing computer hardware that you have?

Aiysha Mayfield: Well, our lab is actually set up in a way where the computers are easily accessible. Its set up where the keyboard slides out from the bottom of the desk and the actual monitor is underneath the desk. So, a person can easily, if they are in wheelchair, just pull their wheelchair up to the computer, everything is at eye level for them. The only requirement for the majority of the people is that they have some mobile skills, because the programs that we have installed are basically computer based training and they are user-friendly where it's just a matter of clicking your mouse to go to the next feature of the software. So, the person is just really doing hands on work where everything is displayed for them on the screen provided -- you know, that they are not visually impaired, provided that they can read on a third grade level, then they can really maximize their experience in the learning labs. Now if we do encounter individuals who -- we have actually encountered people who are visually impaired where we've had to get screens that basically magnify the computer screen in itself. So, the individual is able to see what they were doing and what they were reading. For us it's been more or less 'a learn as you go' process when we come across certain things that we see, then we know what we have to do to enhance the program or make it more user friendly for the next individual.

Vickie Schachter: Thank you.

Operator: The next question is a follow-up from Alan Stultz.

Alan Stultz: Yes. Thank you again. I would like to ask Aiysha a question. Aiysha, you mentioned when you were speaking that you partner with area agencies and instructors to provide some of the class time at your center --

Aiysha Mayfield: Yes.

Alan Stultz: -- I believe I understood that correctly?

Aiysha Mayfield: Yes.

Alan Stultz: And I am in a similar situation here. I have a lot of very good high caliber interactive on-line training materials provided to us by mindleaders.com, but I would really like to get with some of the area university professors and other agencies to see how they could participate in this center. And I wondered how did you approach these people? Did you approach them on a potential commercial basis to where if they are running any kind of training business, they might be able to generate income?

Aiysha Mayfield: Well, what we did was a lot of the community colleges have what they call continuing education program. They would offer GED prep classes, Adult Ed classes. In particular, the Board of Education offers computer classes. And there is such a large demand a lot of times for these types of classes, so people are continuously signing up. And what they lack and the one thing that they actually don't have is space. So, we approach them saying we have this wonderful space that you can use. Actually, you can actually come to us and put whatever type of program that you would see fit. We can say to our partners that we would prefer this type of a class or what initially to get the partner to come in. We kind of just rope them in with the space. We had an idea of what we wanted.

Aiysha Mayfield: We did want to have some GED equivalency programs here. We did want to have more hands on computer classes where there was an actual instructor, because the people were expressing that everybody learns different. So, you know, where as you can learn on your own, somebody else would really prefer to have an instructor to say, "okay everybody, let's do this."

Aiysha Mayfield: And so, by bringing in the Board of Education, they have the trained teachers. They are licensed. We can bring them in and we could only provide them with the lab. It's a wonderful thing when you tell them, "Hey. I have a room there's all ready got computers here for you - all this technology. The software is here."

Alan Stultz: And does your facility -- you mentioned basically it was open to all New York City residents if they could read at the third grade level. There is no kind of fees involved or anything like that?

Aiysha Mayfield: Everything is free of charge.

Alan Stultz: That's fantastic. Thank you very much for the information, Aiysha.

Aiysha Mayfield: You are welcome.

Operator: Again if you have a question at this time, please press the "1" key on your touch-tone telephone.

Vickie Schachter: Adrian, again this Vickie Schachter. I have another question for Aiysha. Aiysha, do you have waiting list for your programs in Astoria?

Aiysha Mayfield: Absolutely.

Vickie Schachter: Could you give us a round number of what those waiting lists look like?

Aiysha Mayfield: On average, our computer class can only house 18 people. We only have 18 terminals. So, what we have done is, we have broken them down into three class sessions a day. One at 9:00, one at 11:00, and one at 2:00. And then, rather than have them five days a week, we have broken it out to where students can come three days a week or two days a week. So, we are actually creating more than one class in a week. So in a weeks' time, we can have up to six computer classes going on. Different individuals like this group of people only come Monday, Tuesday but they come at 9:00 to 11:00. So, they will come the two days a week. That's the way we try to do that but there's is always a waiting list. On an average maybe 20 to 30 people stay on our waiting list for a computer. And with our English classes, the waiting list is usually long because a lot of people want to learn that as a second language. We try to accommodate that as best as possible. Right now, currently we have six different English classes happening in the morning, afternoon and evening, Monday through Friday. This summer, we have just had Saturday classes. So, the demand is very high for some of our courses, whereas the GED and our basic Adult Ed is really flexible. We don't really have waiting list for those classes. Usually the students come in September and in about maybe three months, four months, they take a predictor exam and they test out. So, there is always space in those classes.

Vickie Schachter: Fantastic and as a follow up question because I know someone is going to ask you this: where do you get your funding to operate the Diane Armstrong Family Learning Center?

Aiysha Mayfield: Our primary funding source is Goodwill. But again, they just primarily pay our lights, our rent and for our office equipment. The actual classes, we don't have to pay for because our other partners provide them.

Vickie Schachter: Thank you. Adrian, are there any additional questions?

Operator: Yes ma'am. The next question is from Tamika Stroman from Stephen Smith Towers.

Tamika Stroman: Yes -- hello. One of my questions was for both of you, Aiysha and Mabel. Are you both conducting the classes yourselves for the computer and GED classes and if not, are you receiving grants towards having an instructor because I am the service coordinator here and sometimes I get caught up with doing assessments and documentations, and I don't have enough time to always conduct the computer classes. I did luck up with having a student, Abrian, who was doing her internship. So, for three months she helped with conducting the classes. But when she had graduated, it was very hard with having someone to conduct the class without wanting to be paid. So I need some help in that area.

Aiysha Mayfield: Yes. I was kind of almost having a similar experience as you, whereas I am intake case manager, program coordinator and running a lab. So the thing is with that, I would have kind of sort suggested an intern situation or maybe looking for bodies of like the Board of Education or whatever the primary person is that provides the education in your town.

Tamika Stroman: Right.

Aiysha Mayfield: That maybe you could look to partner with one of them and they could basically take the course and provide the staff for you.

Tamika Stroman: Yes.

Aiysha Mayfield: Maybe that could be an idea because that's basically what we do.

Tamika Stroman: So when I call the Board of Education, who would I be asking for, like what Department?

Aiysha Mayfield: You need somebody to take over your computer lab?

Tamika Stroman: Yes.

Aiysha Mayfield: Okay, well you can actually speak to somebody in Technology or you can actually speak to somebody in Continuing Education. And, they would connect you to that

division, and you would be able to speak with somebody and you could kind of let them know that you have a space available that. And it's easy from them because they are provided a certain amount of grant money and then you are already in a place where you can do all your recruiting yourself and you know, they just have to keep up their attendance numbers. And you already have the people, you have the space, so it's a good partnership for them as well.

Tamika Stroman: Okay, so it's good partnership. Now do you have any residents that are blind? Would I probably need to have Braille equipment?

Aiysha Mayfield: I have people who are maybe visually impaired but not 100 percent blind that needs actual Braille. But I had to refer some of them to take a GED that they wanted to take it in Braille. But not for computers.

Tamika Stroman: So you have no Braille computer equipment?

Aiysha Mayfield: No ma'am.

Tamika Stroman: Do you know of any companies or workbooks that would be useful for -- I have a couple that are 100 percent legally blind.

Aiysha Mayfield: Okay.

Tamika Stroman: I did call the Associated Services for the Blind but I just took it upon myself to ask, since your company seems to be doing extraordinary well.

Aiysha Mayfield: Okay. I could look into it for you. We could exchange numbers and then I could get back to you.

Tamika Stroman: Okay.

Mabel Sandidge: And I would like to answer the part that talks about our center. I work 24 hours a week as a Computer Coordinator. We don't have a service coordinator. We had one in the past and because our main goal is to keep people independent my main focus is to teach them the correct principles that they may do things on their own. So, I show them how to go about using the computer and do their own research but this computer center is open from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon, some days until 5:00 in the afternoon. So, even though they may not be taking the lesson, they can do their own research. So, my focus is to do things to teach them the basics but then let them do a lot of the work on their own and that really helps them remain active, remain focused on doing things for themselves. But that has worked out pretty well for us.

Tamika Stroman: Okay and is your facility open to the public?

Mabel Sandidge: It isn't. It's just for our elderly residents at the present time. Maybe in the future, that will be another step to go about. But right now, we just have it available to them.

Tamika Stroman: Okay. And is that the company's policy or is it just something that you --?

Mabel Sandidge: Well, no it's not the policy but what it is, is that we have been taking baby steps. In the beginning we had no idea how everything was going to turn out and now we are growing, we are doing things, so we are working with other centers to develop consortia, so we can go about the centers with the public and make it publicly available. But in the beginning, that was not the goal. So, as we are growing, we are looking at different possibilities.

Tamika Stroman: Thank you both.

Operator: The next question is a follow up from Revelly Paul.

Revelly Paul: Hi, Mabel. Could you give us your e-mail address again and then the second thing that I wanted to know is what adaptations do you use on your computers. For instance, I am looking for the perfect mouse or trackball for arthritic hands.

Mabel Sandidge: Okay, let me go ahead and give you the e-mail address first. NBA are the initials of the National Benevolence Association and then Bethel, B-E-T-H-E-L. So let me spell the whole thing all over again: nbabethel@earthlink.net and I guess I am losing my mind. What was the second question? I am sorry.

Revelly Paul: The question -- I know my seniors have arthritic hands, some of them have had strokes and we use a trackball for many of them instead of a mouse. We have PCs. Have you found a mouse or a trackball that is ergonomically suitable for an aging population?

Mabel Sandidge: Actually no, and because we are so limited in regards to not having a whole lot of funds to operate our center we just use what we have.

Revelly Paul: Okay. Wow many seniors do you service in your community and how large is your community?

Mabel Sandidge: We have 50 residents and right now, I have 10 people taking the computer lessons.

Revelly Paul: Okay.

Mabel Sandidge: In our computer center, we have five computers on DSL, that have access to do their own research any time they want. What I have done because some people who have strokes or carpal tunnel syndrome and they had to have their surgery is just using the mouse to play games. Playing Solitaire. That just by using it as a game has helped them lose their fear and gain back the mobility in their hand and having the strength. Just practicing that way, we made it pretty simple.

Revelly Paul: Yes. We do, too. And I was just interested if you had any tips in terms of using the trackball and so on. Is there a Web site? Does HUD have a Web site on the Neighborhood Networks Web site? I haven't had a chance to really look at it. Is there a Web site where these kinds of descriptions of what do we do with the seniors at a computing center are available? Can someone, perhaps Vickie, address that?

Vickie Schachter: I don't believe we have a specific Web site, but I would be happy to research it and get back to you or you could call me tomorrow on the toll free, and I would be glad to discuss it with you. I did have an idea, though, about the mouse or trackball for arthritic hands, and I was wondering if you had contacted the Arthritis Foundation to see if they could recommend a particular set of products that they have knowledge of being in widespread use by people with arthritis?

Revelly Paul: That's a great idea, because we have a trackball, but it's no longer available on the market and so we can't replace them as they get broken.

Vickie Schachter: Well, Arthritis Foundation promotes certain vendors and certain products from those vendors, so they might be able to give you some suggestions.

Revelly Paul: Thank you so much. Just for everyone's information at our center we have our resident building. It's about 200 residents and we service about 40 or 50 seniors, from people who have strokes, who literally progress at the slowest of the slow pace, to people who are very adept and can teach us a thing or to. Thank you.

Vickie Schachter: You are welcome.

Operator: I am showing no further questions at this time.

Vickie Schachter: Okay, let's ask one more time.

Operator: Again if you have a question at this time, please press the "1" key on your touch-tone telephone. There are no questions.

Vickie Schachter: Okay. Before we end today's conference call, I think it's important for us to sum up two things that are of critical importance. I think we've learned and heard highlighted by our two speakers today. One of those things is that you don't need to

have special programs for people with disabilities. They can be integrated into existing programs. And if they have special needs on a case-by-case basis, the center staff can try to work through those needs and satisfy them.

The other thing that we heard from Mabel Sandidge ,in terms of an overall theme, is that in serving an elderly population, whether your property is exclusively elderly or is a mixed population, keeping elderly residents busy, focused, with a sense of purpose and with a sense of self worth is probably a critical factor in keeping people in their own homes and not institutionalized. As you know, we have a terrible health care crisis in this country and the cost of keeping people in their own homes is considerably less than the cost of the 24-hour care. Some of the things that Mabel has done to keep even frail elderly busy, alert, and connected to their community and fellow residents, are remarkable and they are very cost efficient. So, I think that there are several lessons to be learned. Again, I'd like to thank Mabel Sandidge in Jonesborough, Tennessee, and Aiysha Mayfield in Astoria, New York, for their participation. And I thank all of you for tuning in. I hope that you will tune into the next conference call, which will be on September 14th. Thank you and have a good day.